

Enterprise FFA gets to attend national convention

Wallowa, Joseph attended virtually

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

INDIANAPOLIS — Twenty-five Enterprise FFA members attended this year's 94th annual National FFA Convention on Oct. 27-30 in Indianapolis, said adviser Stephanie Schofield, among more than 64,000 FFA members from around the nation.

Accompanied by chaperones Jay McFetridge, Jessi Cunningham and Luke Royes, the group left Enterprise on Oct. 25.

Schofield said she has led the Enterprise FFA Chapter in attending the convention every year for the past 23 years.

On the trip, the students also got the chance to interact with members from the Hope, Indiana, FFA Chapter, with whom the Enterprise Chapter has fostered a "sister" relationship. The Hope Chapter housed the Enterprise members during the convention and joined them in an annual get-together at their school. In turn, the Enterprise Chapter hosts an exchange, which brings four or five Hope students to Oregon to attend the State FFA Convention.

"This is an awesome opportunity for students explore leadership opportunities and to set goals for the upcoming year," Schofield said Thursday, Nov. 11.

Member reactions

Last year's convention was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so students attending this year were excited for the trip.

Some of the kids who attended shared their impressions.

"Everyone always talks about the sea of the blue," Eva Anderson said. "Not ever experiencing it for myself, I was not sure what it would feel like to see it through my own eyes. Walking into the convention on Thursday, you are surrounded by blue. We walked upstairs and got our seats. Looking down all you see is 'the sea of blue.' This was the coolest thing I will ever see. You could feel the energy and excitement in the room."

"Looking back on the quick four years we call high school, the memory of this trip I was privileged enough to take will definitely stick with me," Maci Marr said. "This trip has brought with it so much new knowledge and love for different cultures, cities and people. Now with the experience and knowing how amazing this trip can be, I hope to work towards a national proficiency award so I might be able to get to experience the trip again."

"I know that in my future I will be doing something in the agriculture field," Tegan Evans said. "I have not yet figured out what that is going to be, but getting to go on these trips helps kids decide what they might want to be when they get out of high school or college."

"After being able to have this experience at the National FFA Convention, I am hopeful that the tra-



Enterprise FFA adviser Stephanie Schofield looks over the work of some of her agriculture students in the ag and FFA classroom Monday, Nov. 15, 2021. Some of the kids attended the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis in late October.

Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain



Enterprise High School FFA students have a farm tour at Hope, Indiana, late last month.

Stephanie Schofield/Contributed Photo

dition of this trip continues for future classes to be able to experience," Madison Wigen said. "It really is a great way to learn new things about agriculture that could be different from what we are used to which is useful to FFA students for their potential future in agriculture. It also is a great way to meet new people and to get out of your comfort zone in large social settings along with learning valuable lessons especially at the convention workshops that we attended."

Cost saving

That sister relationship also helped with the cost of the trip, Schofield said, by housing with Hope FFA members.

"That saves about \$5,000 in motel costs," she said. As it was, the cost for each student was about \$800 to attend. Schofield said if not for FFA fundraisers and support from the school's FFA alumni chapter, the cost would have been closer to \$1,200.

"It's a massive undertaking to plan it," she said, adding that seeing to the hous-



A "sea of blue" as one Enterprise FFA member described it greeted those who attended the National FFA Convention in late October in Indianapolis.

Stephanie Schofield/Contributed Photo

ing, tickets to events and other miscellany make it a job.

Students came home motivated to pursue goals and to compete in leadership contests including agricultural issues, agriscience, employment skills and proficiency awards.

Formerly known as Future Farmers of America, FFA is a premier leadership organization that has

expanded beyond agriculture and offers students relevant career-related opportunities for growth that both encompass and reach far beyond the traditional scope of the organization.

The trip not only included attending sessions and workshops at the convention, but also tours of farms, Civil War museums, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and many other locations.

ise for the future and have gone above and beyond to achieve excellence.

The requirements to earn the American FFA Degree are set forth in the National FFA Constitution. To be eligible to receive the American FFA Degree, members must meet qualifications, such as receiving a State FFA Degree, holding active membership for the past three years, completing secondary instruction in an agricultural education program and operating an outstanding supervised agricultural experience program. Community service, leadership abilities and outstanding scholastic achievement are also required.

Attending virtually

Jeremy McCulloch, FFA adviser in Wallowa, said his school's chapter had to settle for attending virtually for the second consecutive year, largely because too many students had missed too much school because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our kids were out of school too much this year already," he said Wednesday, Nov. 10.

He said the kids were able to watch several of the sessions, including those of keynote speakers.

But, he said, "It's not the same if you're not there."

He said he had kids from the past honored for being finalists. There were several who will be American Degree winners when they attend next year.

Of note, McCulloch said, Samantha Starner-Durning was a finalist in ag education and was Oregon's winner. She graduated from Wallowa High School this past spring.

"We had a great senior class that was heavily impacted by what was going on," he said, referring to the pandemic.

He also said the Wallowa Chapter had 15 state degree winners in last year's class.

In Wallowa's grades seven through high school, there are 74 FFA members, he said.

"We've always had a pretty high percentage of kids going through this program," he said. "Hopefully next year with any luck we can pull that off."

McCulloch, too, was honored this year. Although he wasn't able to attend, he received an honorary American FFA Degree as an adviser, the highest award an educator can receive.

The Joseph Charter School FFA Chapter also had to settle for virtual attendance. Adviser Chelcee Mansfield said the chapter, which has 90 members, did not attend because of the pandemic and watched from home.

"Joseph has gone every second or third year, according to (former adviser Toby) Koehn," Mansfield said in an email Monday. "We are planning on keeping this tradition unless students qualify in a Career Development Event then we will attend on off years."

She said Joseph's FFA Chapter is planning to attend next year.



Goldsmith

Melville

Top degrees

Although they were not able to attend, members Kaylie Melville and Natalie Goldsmith received their American FFA Degrees this year. This is the highest degree an FFA member can attain. They apply for the award during their freshman year of college.

As the highest degree achievable in the National FFA Organization, the American FFA Degree shows an FFA member's dedication to his or her chapter and state FFA organization. It demonstrates the effort FFA members apply toward their supervised agricultural experience and the outstanding leadership abilities and community involvement they exhibited through their FFA career.

American FFA Degree recipients show prom-

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